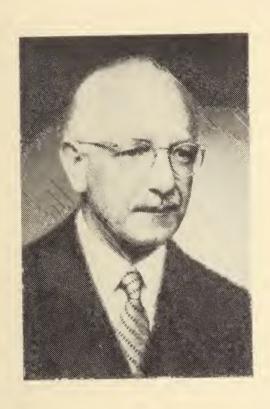
The Brooklyn Jewish Center Review



This Review is dedicated to the observance of the first Yahrzeit of

Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

The Physician in Biblical & Rabbinic Writings by Dr. Nathan Krinsky

The Birth Of A New Jew And A New Humanity by Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

Hasidism As Seen Thru The Eyes Of Elie Wiesel by Rabbi Mordecai H. Lewittes

Meditations On Holiday Lore by Rabbi Abraham P. Bloch

The Sermons And Other Writings of of Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal by Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel

In Commemoration Of A Great Scholar by Mr. Louis Kramer

New Year Greeting Section

Rosh Hashanah, 5744 September, 1983

COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST YAHRZEIT OF RABBI ISRAEL HERBERT LEVINTHAL

On Sunday, October 23, 1983 at 1:00 pm, we will observe Rabbi Levinthal's First Yahrzeit and have prepared a program that will be of great interest.

Rabbi Harold Kushner, author of that best-seller, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People," will tell of his relationship to Rabbi Levinthal from his early years until he was ordained.

Rabbi Simon Greenberg, Vice-Chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary, who had been close to Rabbi Levinthal, both having come from the city of Philadelphia, will speak.

Cantorial selections will be delivered throughout the program by a prominent Cantor.

All are invited to attend and to bring their friends and relatives to this important event.

On the Sabbath of October 15, 1983, Rabbi Abraham P. Bloch will deliver a sermon memorializing Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Louis Kramer Mordecai H. Lewittes Abraham P. Bloch

The opinions expressed by the writers in these pages are not necessarily those of the Review.

NEWS OF THE CENTER

SEASON'S FIRST BULLETIN

The season's first Bulletin will appear under the publication date of November 4th.

MISHNA CLASS RESUMES REGULAR SESSIONS

The Mishna Class will celebrate the end of its 26th year and the start of the 27th on Sunday, October 9th. Services will be held at 8:30 am and will be followed by breakfast at 9:15 am, sponsored by Belle and Isaac Franco. Rabbi Bloch will then conduct the lesson that morning. Registration will take place, as well.

There will be no class on October 16, but regular sessions will begin in full force the morning of October 23 when the breakfast will be sponsored by Mrs. Kaye Gold, in memory of her late husband, David.

MAZEL TOV TO THE KUSHNER FAMILY ON DOUBLE BAR MITZVAH

The son of Rabbi Paul and Shoshana Kushner, Uriel Yair, will be called to the Torah on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah to be held Saturday morning, October 22, at Union Temple.

An additional celebration will take place that morning when the grandfather, Julius Kushner, one of our Trustees, will also be called to the Torah, as he has reached the age of three-score ten and thirteen years.

To the entire Kushner Family, we extend our best wishes and may they always have nachas from such occasions.

HOFFMAN GRANDSON'S AUFRUF HELD AT CENTER

Recently, on the Shabbat of October 8th, Paul Hoffman, grandson of Jacob Hoffman and son of Erma and Herbert Hoffman, was called to the Torah prior to his marriage. The Center extends best wishes and Mazel Tov to our Gabbai and his children.

SISTERHOOD TO HOLD ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Sisterhood's Annual Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, November 2, at noon. The event will take place at Moshe Peking, 40 West 37th Street in Manhattan.

To make reservations, telephone Belle Franco at (516) 593-7544 or the Center office.

IN COMMEMORATION OF A GREAT SCHOLAR

by Mr. Louis Kramer

The life of a great scholar came to an end one year ago. He wasn't to be considered a learned man only, although that in itself is a great achievement. He was more than that. He led a new group of men and women who wanted a shul in a section of Brooklyn that was mainly gentile and there was animosity in the older community.

Forthrightly, he stood fast and gathered the forces who tried their best to calm the feelings of the people. The group went ahead with their plans and built a grand edifice that still stands, a classic in architecture.

Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal began this task in 1919 and soon the structure was brought to fruition. Its dedication took place with the participation of many outstanding personalities in the field of religion and education.

This Review, those that preceded it and we hope will succeed it, is a monument to his memory. Instead of weeping over a great loss, and disregarding life, this publication is a forum to which he had given his writings over the years, is a tribute to his memory and will ever remain so.

As the opening work, we selected a sermon that he preached on Rosh Hashanah September 14, 1920, and appears in his first published book of sermons "Steering or Drifting - Which?" It isn't lengthy and is given intact. Let his words speak for themselves.

Incidentally, it is the last one that was delivered before the Center's sanctuary

was completed. His next sermons were given in that grand synagogue, a jewel in itself.

Recently, I heard of an article that was written by a rabbi but it wasn't given to me until shortly after I was ready to have the Review published. I read this article, written by Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel, and found it to cover likenesses in my editorial. It is an appreciation of the Rabbi's writings. Space is at a premium so I find it impossible to publish Rabbi Gertel's article in full.

Rather than disregard it, I have selected portions of the article, and with complements to Rabbi Gertel, the first pages are being published here in the editorial section. You are bound to enjoy this appreciation.

THE SERMONS AND OTHER WRITINGS OF RABBI ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL

by Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel

Many factors contributed to making Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal (1888-1982) the master of the classical Jewish sermon in this century. Some were matters of background: his being the son of an important rabbi in a long line of rabbis. But most of those factors were a reflection of the soul and the mind of the man himself: his life-long study of midrash, sparked by an insatiable love for Torah; his dedication to Conservative Judaism, and his pioneering spirit in the building of Synagogue, Conservative Movement, and Zion; his passion for America and his faith that the world could be made better through words of Torah; his wonderful command of the English language, manifested in a concise, logical and therefore effective speaking and writing style.

That his life of 94 years spanned most of this century, most of the years of American Conservative Judaism, enabled him to experience the needs and the hopes of the generations he addressed. Indeed, Rabbi Levinthal's sermons are not only literary gems and fruits of the subtlest and most profound scholarship, they are an opportunity to understand the American Jew in the light of the events and beliefs (or at least the difficulties with belief) that shaped his experience. To read the sermons of Israel Levinthal is to perceive the changes of the various generations, the unique challenges faced by each one of them, as well as the remarkable insight of a keen mind that responded to those changes.

Levinthal's first volume, Steering or Drifting — Which? (1928) brought together sermons and addresses delivered from 1918-1927, years of hope and years of restlessness, years when immigrant children became a first generation in America, years when the euphoria of post-war prosperity led to a wave of irresponsibility to tradition and to parents. Levinthal's sermons in that era spoke to

parents and to children of a new concept of the Synagogue - a Center where an American traditional Judaism and a National Jewish Homeland could be built as complementary elements of a single program for the modern Jew. He compared his own Brooklyn Jewish Center, which a small group of forward-looking lay leaders invited him to lead and to build in 1919, to Mount Moriah, where Abraham was to take his son, Isaac. So too, he said, the modern Jew must involve his child in the new altar which is the Synagogue Center. He warned against the dire consequences to be faced by the Jew of the Twenties who had "no time for God or duty, for prayers or Synagogue, for home or child - ever busy, ever engaged, ever in haste in the pursuit of the empty, meaningless, purposeless ambitions in vogue."

The Brooklyn Jewish Center, the first Synagogue Center to apply the concepts embodied in Mordecai Kaplan's pioneering Jewish Center in Manhattan, was regarded during the sixty and more years of Rabbi Levinthal's tenure as a model synagogue. Its services were attended weekly by thousands. Its staff included Richard Tucker as Cantor; Sholom Secunda as Choirmaster and Mordecai Lewittes as Educator. It offered a Mishnah class for adults long before adult education programs in other communities featured such a program, and even provided a kosher restaurant in addition to the swimming pool and sauna. To this very day, it offers numerous activities to

its stalwart loyalists. In 1974, when the Sanctuary was rededicated in Rabbi Levinthal's name, he urged the Congregation to work even more zealously to maintain their Center, and recalled the good years when the Congregation passed the 2,000 mark in membership, and when "in one year the income was so large that the Center was able to contribute \$10,000 to the Jewish Theological Seminary besides its regular annual membership campaign for the Seminary." For thousands of people, The Brooklyn Jewish Center, as monument and as

memory, still inspires dedication to the synagogue, to Conservative Judaism, and to Zion.

Steering or Drifting — Which? was published by the prestigious general house of Funk and Wagnalls, and went through two editions — a tribute to its power to analyze the changes in a generation capable of effecting a renascence in Judaism or a diminishment of its influence. It obviously spoke to many parents and children, and won the respect of a general audience.

THE BIRTH OF A NEW JEW AND A NEW HUMANITY

By Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

Two interesting traditions have come down to us from the Rabbis concerning the festival of Rosh Hashanah. In the first place, we are told that Rosh Hashanah marks the birth, the creation of the first man and the first woman upon this universe. "It was on Rosh Hashanah, in the first hour of that day, that the thought came to God to create Adam, the first human being." We celebrate today, according to this tradition, the birthday, not of the father of the Jewish people alone, but of the father of all humanity.

In the second tradition, we are told that it was on Rosh Hashanah that the bondage of the Jewish people ceased in the land of Egypt. In other words, according to this tradition, we observe today the birth of Jewish freedom, the creation of the Jewish national consciousness.

It is in this two-fold aspect of this Holy Day that the genius of Judaism reveals itself. All peoples and all nations celebrate the birth of their own freedom, of their own national existence. No nation, except Israel, celebrates the birth of humanity, the creation of the human family. All peoples and nations concentrate their thoughts, their efforts, their hopes upon themselves; no nation, except Israel, thinks also of humanity, of the welfare of the human family as well as of itself.

And if the world today is sick at heart, if civilization lies prostrate, it is because the nations of the world have not yet

learned this lesson from the Jew - that true national life, that real civilization and humanitarian weal, can result only if every nation thinks not merely of and for itself, but of and for humanity as well. Look ye well to the prayer service of this holy day - the holiest in the calendar of the Jew - and tell me, pray, which nation, aye, which religious sect, possesses the like of it. With the same breath we pray: "Give glory, O Lord, unto Thy people"; "Give joy to Thy land and gladness to Thy city," and also "Impose, O Lord, Thine awe upon all Thy works"; "May they all form one league to do Thy will with aperfect heart"; "Our God, and God of our fathers, reign Thou in Thy glory over the whole universe," "And shine forth in the splendor and excellence of Thy might upon all the inhabitants of Thy world."

Not for Israel alone does the Jew pray, but for the glory and the splendor of the whole human family does he beseech God. He yearns for the end of Israel's misery, but he also pleads for the day "when the dominion of arrogance, of iniquity and wickedness shall pass away from all the earth."

Alas, how the world needs this lesson from the Jew today!

For years the world has been bleeding. Hundreds of thousands of our best young men have been brought to an early grave; millions have been maimed and wounded, crippled for life. What was the underlying cause of all this bloodshed? What is the reason that even today, when the world's peace is supposed to have been made, when, for a moment, we were led to believe that a new heaven and a new earth had been revealed - what is the reason that nations still wage wars of aggression and conquest? What is the reason that every people looks upon the others with suspicion and hatred, and stands ready to unsheath its sword once more? What is the reason that the League of Nations, for the establishment of which we thought the war had been fought, has not been able to enlist the wholehearted support of all nations, and that before it saw the light of day, many had already foretold its doom?

The reason is simple enough. The world has not yet advanced to the Jew's conception of national life, to the Jew's philosophy of "live and let live," to the Jew's theory that a nation in order to live and to prosper must seek the welfare not only of itself but of its sister nations as well. From childhood on, the Frenchman is taught that Germany's death means France's life, and the German is taught to believe that Germany can prosper only with the downfall of France. England, Italy, Russia, Poland, Austria, Turkey, Japan and China, each regards the other's weakness as her only hope of success. The Teuton looks down upon the Latin, the Latin regards the Teuton as his inferior, both hate the Slav, and the Slav mistrusts both, while all despise the

Semite.

How different is this attitude of the world from the attitude of the Jew!

You recall, no doubt, the beautiful tale of the Rabbis that when God resolved to create Adam, the father of the human race, He took the dust from which man was made, not from Palestine, mark you, the land of the Jew; not from Jerusalem, the holy city; not from Zion, the site of the Holy Temple; but He took a little earth from every corner of the globe, from East and West, from North and South. "Why?" you ask. Hear the Jewish Rabbis' answer: "So that in the future no nation shall say, from my earth was Adam created; so that no people may say, we are greater, we are worthier than our neighbor, for Adam had his birth here." That is the Jewish Conception of human brotherhood - that every man, no matter what his race, his color or his creed may be, is the child of God and bears the image of the Divine. And until the world learns this lesson, until the nations adopt the Jew's theory as the basis of all national life, we may expect wars and bloodsheed, massacres and persecutions. Let the nations of the earth learn that in seeking the happiness of other nations, they too will find happiness; let them form a League upon that principle, and the world will be transformed from a veritable Hell, which it is today, into a Garden of Eden, an abode of peace and happiness for all.

In a remarkable passage of the Midrash the Sages tell us: "As long as Israel remains in exile, the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be complete." What the Rabbis meant was to emphasize the truth that as long as injustice is done to one people, as long as nations think only of themselves and not of others, then no matter how much progress these nations achieve, the Kingdom of God cannot be established on earth.

On this day, when the Jewish people commemorate the birth of humanity, when we pray for the happiness of all peoples, we plead with the peoples of the earth: Do you want peace and happiness for yourself? Then begin to think and to act and to work in terms of humanity and not of self alone! Learn from the Jew the lesson of love for all mankind. Cease to hate, cease to persecute, cease to war, cease to massacre, learn to regard others

as fellow men and brothers, and the world will soon observe the birth of a new humanity, of real civilization. Thus Rosh Hashanah speaks to the world.

To the Jew it bears yet a further message! This day commemorates not only the birth of humanity, but it also commemorates the day when Jewish bondage ceased in the land of the Pharaohs, when Israel threw off the shackles of slavery and proclaimed itself a free and liberty loving people.

If the nations of the world have forgotten their duty to humanity, we Jews have forgotten our duty to ourselves. Rosh Hashanah reveals the genius of the soul of Israel because it emphasizes a people's double duty - its duty to the world and its equally sacred duty to itself. Just as it is important to think and to work in behalf of others, so is it important not to neglect, not to abandon one's self. If the other nations have gone to one extreme in thinking only of themselves, we Jews have gone to the other extreme in thinking only of others. Our musicians have sung not for us, but for all other peoples; our statesmen have planned not for Israel, but for all other nations; our soldiers and warriors have fought not for the Jew, but for all humanity; our geniuses have given of their strength not for Israel, but for the world. Our people are being murdered, butchered, threatened with extinction, but we think not of them; our best intellects are devoted to planning more freedom for the Russian, larger influence for the Pole, greater safety for the Frenchman, reconstruction for the Belgian - for all and for everyone, but not for ourselves. We continually celebrate the birth of humanity; we forget to observe the birth of Jewish freedom and emancipation.

There is a fine legend, told to us by the Rabbis, with reference to the words that we read in this festival's portion of the Law: "And Sarah nursed children." "Did then Sarah nurse many children?" ask the Sages. But Rabbi Levi has explained that on the day when Isaac was weaned, Abraham prepared a feast to celebrate the event. All the other peoples, however, mocked and sneered at them, and said: "See, this aged couple, who never had a child, have now taken some strange lad and claim him as their own." When Abraham heard this, he invited all the people of the land to bring their infant

children unto Sarah; and Mother Sarah took each unto her breast, and by a miracle nursed them all. This picture of Mother Sarah nursing the children of all peoples is the true picture of Israel throughout its long exile. The world has been nursed at the breast of the Jew; but, alas, Israel itself goes hungry and starved. Mother Sarah was more careful. In nursing strange children, she did not forget her duty to her own Isaac. First she weaned Isaac; first she gave of her strength and of her soul to her own offspring, and then, when Isaac was fully nurished, did she give of herself to the children of strangers.

It was on Rosh Hashanah that Jewish serfdom ceased in Egypt. This Rosh Hashanah will mark the end of modern Jewish serfdom, if we learn to do our duty to ourselves. "Great is repentance," say the Rabbis, "for it bringeth near the redemption, as it is written: 'And the redeemer shall come to Zion and to them that turn from transgression in Jacob.' When will the redeemer come? When they shall turn from their transgression toward Jacob." When the Jew shall repent for his transgression to Jacob, for the sin that he commits against his own people, then will Israel's redemption come.

May this day teach the world to learn from the Jew to think of humanity as well as of itself, and may it teach the Jew to learn from the world to think of himself as well as of humanity; then shall we see the birth of a new Jew and a new humanity. Then in truth will the words of Israel's Sages be realized: "And God will say unto Israel — yea, unto humanity, too — 'My children, I look upon you as if today, on Rosh Hashanah, you had been made for Me anew, as if today I created you — a new being, a new people, a new humanity." "Amen!

PLEASE NOTE!

Our Legacy Development Committee is ready to assist you or your legal representative to make provision for gifts in your will.

Information can be obtained from our office.

MEDITATIONS ON HOLIDAY LORE

By Rabbi Abraham P. Bloch

On the solemn day of Rosh Hashanah, the sins and mitzvot of the Jewish people are placed upon the heavenly scale. Satan, in his role of prosecuting attorney, diligently collects a multitude of bundles filled with Jewish sins committed in many parts of the world and brings them to the celestial court. The defense attorney's chair, on that particular year, was filled by the soul of the sainted Rabbi of Berdichev. The Jews could not have wished for a more dedicated and sympathetic defender than the legendary Rabbi of Berdichev.

Satan's exhilarated and excited appearance was in sharp contrast to the sad and forlorn look of the Berdichever. The bundles of Jewish mitzvot which the angels gathered for the defense looked thin and puny beside the massive bulging bundles of sin. In great desperation, the Berdichever pondered his strategy. When Satan was distracted for a moment, he pushed the sin bundles into the flaming pit of hell and left the wicked prosecutor without a shred of evidence.

The Berdichever's precipitate action, well intentioned as it was, was not exactly legal or ethical. Satan, crying out in agony, demanded that the Berdichever be brought to trial. "If the Berdichever claims to uphold the Torah, he must be judged in accordance with its laws." He even opened the Scroll of the Torah and read out aloud: "If the thief cannot make restitution, he shall be sold as a servant to work out the value of his theft."

There is no transgression of the Law in heaven and the Berdichever was found guilty. Satan had placed an exorbitant value upon his sin bundles and the Berdichever was unable to make restitution. Will he be sold into servitude to Satan? Perish the thought. At the last moment the Almighty appeared and "bought" the Berdichever's soul as his own servant. A hint of this incident is implicit in the stirring prayer "Ba-Din"; "To the one who buys his servant at the Judgment Place."

A rereading of this legend in the climate of the post-Watergate era evokes some thoughts and comments. The basic

question is: "Does the end justify the means?" The intentions of the Berdichever were noble, but the means were still illegal and therefore he was guilty in the eyes of the law. However, since his sincerity and selflessness were beyond doubt, the Almighty rescued him, but not until he paid the debt. Efforts to exonerate evil doers on the grounds of their good intentions are contrary to elementary justice. The payment of one's debt to society is a precondition to the process of redemption

П

The tone of our prayers, the benefits we request and the goals set forth in our supplications, frequently reflect our human limitations and weaknesses. Folklore illustrates our common shortcomings with the reported story of the Russian soldier who was selected to be Czar Nicholas' bodyguard as he stood on top of a hill watching the progress of a battle in the Crimean War. A low flying shell nearly knocked the King's head off but for the timely action of the bodyguard who pushed him down to the ground. The Czar wanted to show his gratitude to the soldier and offered to grant him whatever reward he might request. "If it pleases Your Majesty," the soldier replied, "I would appreciate if you would transfer me to another battalion so that I could escape the tyranny of my present Corporal." "You foolish soldier," the Czar replied, "as long as you are asking for a favor, why don't you plead that I promote you to the rank of Corporal? Promotion ordered."

On the High Holidays, our folklore points out, Jews are granted a special privilege — to ask and to receive favors from God. We may not be exactly in the position of the bodyguard, but we do preserve the Torah. If not for us, the Torah would have become a forgotten word. As guardians of the Torah, we may be entitled to special favors. What favors does the average Jew pray for? If he Head of State is wicked, we ask for a kinder rules, a finer person. We are just looking for a transfer to another Corporal. What

we should pray for is that we should be our own masters and that our welfar should not depend upon the whim of an individual, be he good or bad.

The message of this bit of folklore is still relevant today. Jews have prayed for centuries for tolerant rulers, willing to pure up with diasporic afflictions as long at they were bearable. They did not enter tain prayers for strength and courage to rebel against tyranny, to fashion the own destiny, to carve out their own land where they could be masters of their own fate and future. After the Nazi Holocaus Jews learned a new prayer and the Stat of Israel was created.

Many of us in America pray for law an order, for safety in the streets and in outhomes. What we ask for are new corporals, more dedicated police officers an greater numbers of them. We forget the pray that we be granted a greater share in the solution of this problem, that we become the masters of this situation be setting a personal example of leadershift and integrity which will help dissipate the climate of lawlessness that pervades or lives.

Ш

When the High Priest entered the Hol of Holies in the great Temple of Jerusalem, he offered a short prayer for the welfare of the Jewish people. Th prayer read as follows: "Grant Israel a their needs, that they may not be compell ed to make a livelihood, one from th other, and the Jew from the non-Jew." peripheral reading of this prayer leave one puzzled. What is wrong with makin a livelihood from one another? Th farmer must sell his produce to cit dwellers and the manufacturer must sel his wares to customers. Those who sel services and skills also depend upon other people to earn their living.

Reflecting upon the significance of the High Priest's prayer, the Berdicheve Rabbi commented as follows: "The High Priest's prayer on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, was not related to the material welfare of the people but to the state of their spiritual excellence. The term 'livelihood' was used as a synonym for life and meritorious existence.''

Virtue and sin are relative and absolute concepts. One may appear virtuous in the overall perspective of the general climate in which he lives. Where the vast majority is violent and unruly, the minority which refrains from criminal behavior is relatively or compraratively virtuous. On the other hand there are many individuals who conform to all the rules dictated by our highest standards of morality and ethics. Such people are not comparatively virtuous. They are absolutely virtuous.

In praying for the Jews on Yom Kippur, the High Priest expressed his fervent wish that the Almighty grant them life and judge their virtue on the basis of a comparative scale. Let not the innocence of any individual emerge from a differentiation of "one from the other," namely, that the other is much worse than he is. It would be equally regretful if the reputation of a Jew would depend upon a differentiation from a non-Jew.

The significance of this message is occasionally revealed in our comments on youth, and our tolerant attitude to the unconventional behavior of our children.

"Others are much worse" is a magic phrase which condones many sins. The same is true on the occasions when we are critical of the State of Israel. The common excuse is that by comparison to some other nations, their record is lily-white. We are not looking for relative but absolute merit, even though we are aware of the practical difficulties.

The High Priest no longer prays for us on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies. Everyone of us must offer that prayer within the sanctity of our hearts and souls.

HASIDISM — AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF ELIE WIESEL

by Rabbi Mordecai H. Lewittes

Wiesel believes that his mission in life is not only to serve as an eyewitness to the Holocaust but also as a teller of tales, especially Hasidic tales. His inspired portraits of Hasidic masters can be found in *Souls on Fire* (reissued by Summit Books, 1982) and *Somewhere A Master* (Summit Books, 1982).

Wiesel tries to recapture his childhood years in Sighet, Rumania, before the Holocaust, when his grandfather fascinated the enchanted listener by recounting the legends of the founders and teachers of Hasidism: Israel Baal Shem Tov, The Maggid of Mezeritch, Levi-Yitzhak of Berditchev, Elimelekh of Lizensk, Nahman of Bratzlav, Menahem-Mendl of Kotzk, Aharon of Karlin, Moshe-Leib of Sassov, The Holy Seer of Lublin and many others.

"A Hasid must know how to listen," said the grandfather. "To listen is to receive. Our people is what it is because it knew how to listen and receive the Law, right? Yet, though the Torah was given only once, each one of us must receive it every day."

In Sighet, Elie Wiesel could see in the distance the Carpathian Mountains where the Baal Shem Tov once lived and dreamed. The major emphasis of the Baal Shem Tov, says the author, was on love: love of the Almighty (Ahavat Ha-Shem), love of the Torah (Ahavat Ha-Torah), and love of Israel and of one's fellow-man (Ahavat

Yisrael).

These three loves were linked in an unbreakable bond. "The Besht maintained that true love can develop one's *entire* being: he who loves God loves His creation, loves His law, loves His people. And conversely: he who loves His pepple — meaning he who loves people, loves God..."

The Hasid communed with God not only through prayer but through dance and song and joy, through humor and laughter, through exuberance and enthusiasm and ecstasy. The Hasid was singed by sacred fire. The Hasid's song contained "the song of rivers and forests, clouds and fields."

It is told of Aharon of Karlin, for example, tht on the eve of the Sabbath he would joyously sing the Song of Songs in honor of Queen Shabbat. Once the Maggid of Mezeritch complained: "When you sing even the angels in heaven fall silent; they listen to your beautiful voice instead of devoting themselves to praise of God."

Above all, the Hasid was warned not to allow himself to be overcome by sadness and melancholy. Nahman of Bratzlav used to say to his followers, "For the love of Heaven, O Jews, do not despair!" Another Rebbe cautioned his followers: "My children, my children, I want you to know that joy will lift you up to dizzying heights; I also want you to know that sadness will pull you down into the

abyss."

Every Jew, even the simple, unlearned Jew, could attain the goal of *Ahavat Ha-Shem*. Every human being is sacred and deserves respect. Every person, said one Rebbe, must regard another person as if he were a Sefer Torah, a holy scroll. Menahem Mendl of Vitebsk used to say, "Man is the language of God."

Mendl of Kotzk taught: "God is where He is allowed to come in. God's favorite dwelling is neither a palace of gold nor an edifice of marble but man's heart..."

Sincerity and purity of heart rather than meticulous repetition of words were the essence of prayer. Once, for example, Levi-Yitzhak of Berditchev delayed the Yom Kippur service as he meditated. An hour went by, and another. The people grew impatient. Finally the Rebbe concluded his silent meditation and explained:

There is in our midst someone who cannot read. But he wishes to sing. And so he allows his heart to speak, "You are God; I am but a man. You are Almighty and know everything; I am weak and ignorant. All I can do is decipher the twenty-two letters of the sacred tongue; let me give them to You to make into prayers for me and they will be more beautiful than mine." The Rebbe raised his voice: "And that, brothers and sisters, is why we had to wait. God was busy composing prayers with the letters of the

alphabet."

Repentance was an ever-present possibility for the man who has sinned. Said Rebbe Nahman of Bratzlav: "No heart is as whole as one that has been broken."

Although the Hasidim never equalled the scholarship of their opponents, the Mitnaggedim, study and love of Torah were a basic part of Hasidism. "What is the difference between the Mitnagged and the Hasid?" asks the author. "The Mitnagged loves the Torah, whereas the Hasid loves the person who loves the Torah."

Love of Torah, taught Nahman of Bratzlav is our assurance that even in exile Israel is not forgotten by God. He used to tell the following parable:

There was a prince who was forced to leave his father's palace. After years of exile the prince became homesick and yearned to return to the court. One day a messenger arrived with a letter from the king. The prince read the letter again and again. Smiling, he began to kiss each word. The letter was a link with the past. It was proof that his father was still alive. The king was king and the prince, although in exile, was still prince. Someday he might be permitted to return.

The parable was clear. The king, of course, was God. The prince was Israel. The letter was the Torah which was Israel's consolation even in exile and which required constant study. "We are all princes," declared Reb Aharon Karliner. "To forget that, is the gravest sin of all."

What of those who had mastered the Torah? They could carry out the spirit of the Torah through *Ahavat Yisrael* — love of Israel and of one's fellow-man. Hasidism was "an attempt to tear down everything that separated one man from another..."

This was the advice that Aharon of Karlin used to give his Hasidim: Study the Zohar, the Book of Splendor. If that is too difficult, open the Talmud, study together even if only one page. If the Talmud is inaccessible, read the portion of the week, tell tales about the Hasidic masters, or sing a Hasidic Niggun which is the key to higher spheres. "But what if, woe unto us, they don't know a Niggun?

Well, in that case, let them... love one another."

A sterling example of loving one another — Jew or Gentile — was provided by Moshe-Leib of Sassov. It was he who inspired the famous Yiddish tale by I. L. Peretz of the Tzaddik who was reputed to ascend to heaven each Selihot night. In reality he chopped wood which he gave to a sick, bedridden woman who could not afford to purchase fuel. Even the sceptical Mitnagged who had stealthily followed the Rebbe was forced to admit that the Rebbe had spiritually ascended to heaven — and perhaps even higher!

It was also Moshe-Leib who was hero of the folk-tale of the Rebbe who came late to the Kol Nidre prayers because he had heard an infant crying and who remained with the child, singing softly to it as he rocked the cradle, until the mother returned from the synagogue.

The Hasidim lived with the faith that through good deeds they could hasten the advent of the Messiah. When offered political protection by Austria, the Rizhiner insisted that his documents read "Citizen of Jerusalem."

Levi-Yitzhak tore up his son's engagement contract because the scribe had written that the marriage would take place in Berditchev.

"Berditchev," he exclaimed. "Why Berditchev? This is what you will write: The marriage will take place on such a date in Jerusalem, except if the Messiah has not yet come; in which case the ceremony will be performed in Berditchev."

Throughout Souls on Fire and Somewhere a Master there are foreshadowings and intimations of the Holocaust which would destroy most Hasidic communities more than a century later. Israel of Rezhin, says the author, foresaw what was to come. "The world was doomed, mankind rushing to its fall."

Nahman of Bratzlav told the story of the king's friend who knew that the next harvest would fail but who prepared for famine and saved his life. In return his mission was to go from country to country proclaiming, "Good people, do not forget! What is at stake is your life, your survival! Do not forget, do not forget! A poignant scene is the one where Wiesel talks about his grandfather's death during the Holocaust. He tries to imagine his grandfather in the train that carried him away and wonders whether he went to his death singing or praying.

There are many who criticize Wiesel as an author. They find his biographical portraits rambling, repetitious, didactic. To others his lyrical style is masterful and powerful.

To his host of admirers these Hasidic tales will prove to be a source of inspiration. The portraits reinforce the picture of Hasidism as a movement which restored hope and faith and fervor to those who were submerged in poverty and despair.

"Hasidism is a movement out of despair, away from despair — a movement against despair. Only Hasidism Judaism too. Who is a Jew? A Jew is hear — or she — whose song cannot be muted whose joy cannot be killed by the enemy... ever."

RESERVE

Sunday, October 30, 1983 11:00 am

for our

Annual Meeting

Annual Report by our President

Mr. Benjamin Moskowitz

Refreshments and Entertainment Social Hour

THE PHYSICIAN IN BIBLICAL AND RABBINIC WRITINGS

by Nathan Krinsky, M.D.

Judiam has always placed great emphasis on the value of human life. Jewish law teaches us that human life is supreme; so much so that to preserve a life for even the briefest moment, almost all Jewish ritual commandments, including dietary laws, and observance of the Sabbath and the Holy Days, may be suspended. The only prohibitions that remain inviolate are those against idolatry, adultery, incest and murder. (Yoreh De'ah 157:1)

It is taught that the human body, life itself, belongs to God, and is given to man, who acts as a caretaker. In Judaism, the patient has the obligation to preserve his own life, and treatment may be forced upon him. It behooves man to care for that life as best he can — to dignify it, and to hallow it.

The Talmudic passage in Sanhedrin 37a illustrates this thought most eloquently. Referring to the creation of Adam, it states: "Therefore only a single human being was created in the world, to teach that if any person caused a single soul to perish, Scripture regards him as if he had caused an entire world to perish; and if any human being saves a single soul, Scripture regards him as if he had saved an entire world."

From a study of the vast Biblical and Talmudic literature, we acquire a picture of the way the ancient Jewish people protected itself from illness, and cared for the sick. We become acquainted with the medical knowledge and practice in the formative period of Jewish civilization, and are made aware of the insight of the ancient Hebrew Sages with the mysteries of disease and healing, and of life and death.

We are dealing with a time in ancient Jewish history where there was belief that demons caused illness, e.g.: — the Talmud states that a mad dog is possessed by an evil spirit. There was belief, too, in astrology and the evil eye, magic incantations, and amulets to ward off disease.

In contrast, we can judge the sophistication of the Sages of the Talmud

by their understanding of a bleeding disorder, probably Hemophilia, and its genetic transmission. The Talmud rules that if two children of a woman suffered sanguination following circumcision, the third child should not be circumcised. Also, if two sisters each had a son who died of bleeding following circumcision, the third sister should not circumcise her son. (Talmud Yebamoth 64b)

Judaism is perceived by some as a system of faith and laws; to others the concept of ethics constitutes a significant factor. However, we look at it, Jewish life is guided, regulated and governed by what we know as Halakha, Jewish religious law. And as Rabbi Adliv Steinsaltz said very recently, a Jew has to take this defined body of law and apply it to every situation, every problem — new or old.

Problems there were in those ancient days! To preserve life was not only stressed, but was definitely written into all sacred writings. The problems became Who and How?

To the Jew who desired to follow not only the spirit, but also the letter of the law, profound questions had to be answered.

Was it permissible for a patient to call a physician to heal his sickness, or was it required that he place his trust and faith in God, and depend upon Divine Providence for healing?

Was it permissible for a man to become a physician and to treat sick people, or would he be interfering with God's will?

The Jew to whom these questions were important sought answers in the Torah, for as we read in Psalm 19:8, "The Torah of God is perfect." And in the Torah we find these passages:

a) Exodus 15:26 - "and He said: 'if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord, Thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His eyes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee." This last phrase was wide-

ly interpreted to mean, "for I am the Lord, Thy Physician."

b) Exodus 23:25 - deals with the same thought and promise: "And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless the bread and thy water, and I take sickness away from you."

On the basis of these passages, many Jews did not call upon the physician to treat what became known as "internal" of "natural" or "physiologic" illnesses, for they were considered to be punishmen for sin or transgression, or were simply considered as an Act of God, no understood by the patient. Such illnesses were considered to be different from in juries sustained from being assaulted which were permitted to be treated by man, on the basis of the reading of Exodus 21:18, which we shall considered below.

There are writings by Nachmanides Karo and others which supported the view that if one is sick, he should pray and place his faith in God's Divine healing. In Aboth de Rabbi Nathan 36:5, we are told that the physician is counted amongst those professions whose members have no share in the eternal bliss (World to Come) because he is an accomplice of the patient who should leave his destiny to the decree of the Lord.

In Sanhedrin 34a, Abaye is quoted as having said, "One Biblical verse may convey several teachings." Based on this verse, there were many who believed that a physician was authorized to treat the victim of an assault. This interpretation was based on the passage found in Exodus 21:18-19, and commented upon in Bava Kamma. 85a, which indicated that if a man injures another in a fight, the attacker "must cause him to be thoroughly healed." Although this text makes reference more directly to money liability, it has been interpreted as giving license, even making it obligatory for human medical intervention.

As time went on, it became the normative view that the physician was sanctioned to treat not only injuries caused by assault, but also "natural" or "internal" disease. This concept was based on the Biblical passages:

- a) In Exodus 21:18 which called for treatment for injuries caused by assault.
- b) Deuteronomy 22:2 "And thou shalt restore it to him;" considering that being ill is "lost" health, and thus to mean "to heal his body;" restore his lost health.
- c) Leviticus 19:16 "Neither shalt thou stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor." This passage was taken to mean that if one saw someone drowning, or being attacked by bandits, or being mauled by wild beasts, one was obligated to help him to save his life. Thus, if one must save a life in these circumstances, surely one must cure disease, which may cause loss of life if untreated.
- d) Deuteronomy 4:15 in the passage "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves," must have been the source for Maimonides' teaching, expressed in his Mishne Torah (Hilkhot Deot 3:3) that a person who is hungry or is ill or has an aching limb cannot, or may not have the desire to, carry out God's precepts.

In such manner, through interpretation, reasoning, logic, was the problem of the physician's relationship to illness and the patient.

In Judaism a physician is regarded as a messenger of God. He is to attend a patient with his "heart toward Heaven" (prayers), for it is God who accomplishes the will, and as Rabina in Sanhedrin 106b stated: "The Holy One, Blessed Be He, requires the heart." Thus it was held that it was the obligation of the physician to respond to every call, for not every patient can be healed by every physician, and not every physician is the proper messenger for a particular patient.

Amongst the other duties that the physician was called upon to perform, we learn that he acted as an expert witness in civil court cases, and to evaluate the physical condition of a convicted criminal, in terms of deciding whether the criminal could tolerate the sentence of flogging. Also, he was consulted regarding the severity of an illness in order to determine whether one may desecrate the Sabbath or the Day of Atonement.

The earliest known Hebrew Medical

writing is that by Asaph, which dates back to the 7th Century. It is noted that Asaph Horafe (Asaph the Physician) wrote a distinctly Jewish Medical Oath, sometimes referred to as the Jewish Hippocratic Oath. This consisted of a series of commandments somewhat similar to the Ten Commandments of the Bible.

In the opinion of the author of one of the most noted texts on Biblical and Talmudic Medicine, one of the principal duties of the physician of antiquity was the regulation of one's entire mode of life, particularly the *nourishment* of the sick patient. (Are we reverting to that practice?) Since in Judaism a physician is regarded as a messenger of God, this duty seems quite appropriate, for there are many writings which indicate God's blessing for our bread, and for our water, and for the herbs which He produced to be used as medicine.

Ambivalence characterized the physician's place in this ancient Jewish society. There were those, like the commentators of the Mishnah (Kiddushim 4:14) who wrote: "The best physician is destined to go to hell." Rashi, about 1050, compiled a list of all the bad things which people said about physicians, and the Tosafist, Rabbi Yitzhak ben Sen summarizes them this way, "they cause the death of the patient." It is quite probable that this deprecation of the physician reflected the view of those who held the belief that the sick should depend upon God. "Whomever God decreed to be sick must bear his sickness and not attempt to set aside Divine punishment."

On the other hand, there is much in the literature to indicate acceptance and strong praise for the physician. The Torah and the Talmud, by interpretation, stressed the need for, and gave authority to, the physician. Maimonides in his Mishneh Torah (Hilkhot Deot 3:3), as does the Talmud in Sanhedrin 17b, state that no wise man should live in a city that has no physician. In Pesachim 113a, it is stated that no one should live in a city where the mayor is a physician, for fear that his occupation with public affairs may not give him time to concentrate on his patients. Rabbi Meir, about 1150, was afraid that the physician-mayor might be so busy with his patients that he might not be able to adequately devote his attention to municipal matters. In Siah 38:3, we read,

"the skills of the physician exalt him, and he is admired among the great."

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In Egypt, according to Herodotus, every physician was a specialist, or an "eminent doctor." Not so his Jewish colleague. He was an ordinary practicing physician who served all needs: a family physician, an internist, an eye specialist, a neurologist, who it is written, treated even the love-sick (Psalm 147:3), a dentist, and also performed circumcisions. He acted as a pharmacist who prepared and carried his own medications which he made from plants God had produced, for as Sirach 38:4 states, "the Lord has created medicines out of the earth and a sensible man will not despise them."

There isn't much mention of the obstetrician-gynecologist, for the obstetrician in the modern sense did not exist. The woman was delivered by the mid-wife, and only when there was a serious problem, such as a vial-position, was the physician called. A woman was rarely examined by a male physician; he did not examine the female genitalia. Only the female doctor did that. Problems regarding purity were discussed between the priest and the physician.

Little information exists concerning a physician's training. It is assumed that the essential professional training occurred by personal instruction of the student by a teacher who was experienced and knowledgeable in medical therapeutics. There is mention in Deuteronomy Rabbah 6:13 of the disciple of a physician who "was already taught all teachings of

medicine," and in Jerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1:57b, it is told of a physician who possessed a narthex (box) full of remedies which he gave to his son when the latter established himself in medical practice.

Another method of learning, which originally was customary among all nations, was the practice of Empiricism. This refers to the philosophical doctrine that all knowledge is acquired from experience, i.e., from sense perception.

It is totally uncertain as to when a corpse was first dissected for scientific purposes. Whether or not Jews performed autopsies in antiquity is difficult to discern.

Fees are mentioned in the ancient Jewish literature. The Biblical passage in Exodus 21:19, "and cause him to be healed" was taken to mean that the attacker must pay the incurred fees. It is written that if the offender suggested that the victim go to a public clinic, the injured party was to have replied. "A physician who heals for nothing is worth nothing." (Babba Kamma 85a).

Whether physicians should receive remuneration caused much discussion. Some commentators held that it was necessary to permit the physician to accept a fee, not for the advice given to the patient, but for the loss of time during which the physician could have been earning a living by other means. From the writings one may infer that a physician's fees were generally insufficient. Individual physicians who were exceptionally prominent received higher fees. In Yoreh De'ah 336:3 there is discussed the case of a patient who, because of great stress, paid an excessive fee. The feeling of the commentator was that the acquiescence of the patient made this fee binding; the reasoning being that the object of the sale is the knowledge and the skill of the physician, and this cannot be appraised in monetary terms. The conduct of the physician, however, is considered not proper.

Finally, let us turn our thoughts to the question of responsibility of the physician as perceived in the days of which we write. We have learned that the physician did have Biblical and Talmudic sanction to treat patients, and that patients had been authorized, even urged, to seek

human medical treatment. Karo, in his commentary on a code of Jewish law called Tur (Yoreh De'ah no. 336), quotes Nachmanides as saying that without a warrant to treat, a physician might hesitate to treat patients for fear of fatal consequences, for there is an element of danger in every medical procedure. That which heals one patient, may kill another.

In similar vein, Rabbi Shabbetai ber Meir ha Kohere in his Siftei Kohen states that the reason for the need of Torah permission to heal rested on the necessity to avoid the physician saying, "who needs this anguish? If I err (if I make a mistake) I will be considered as having spilled blood."

Although the physician is considered to be a messenger of God carrying out the Divine will, and therefore is an instrument in the hands of the Creator, he still does have the right of self-determination, as does every person. This conflict between Providence and free-will, as taught in Judaism, poses one of the most difficult problems in the philosophy of religion. Since a person is morally free, he has to bear responsibility for his actions.

Jewish law, like our modern medical ethics, permits a physician to choose which patient to treat. However, once he treats the patient, he is not permitted to abandon him until treatment is completed. If a physician intentionally injures a patient, he is considered liable. If he injures a patient more than is necessary, then negligence may be demonstrated, and he is liable. If the injury occurs following an error on the part of the physician, he is held blameless, for as Tosefta Gitten 4:6 states — "because of the Public Good." This is based on the Biblical statement that he who strikes a person and injures him must pay the physician's fees, and the Divine arrangement of the world requires and presupposes the existence of the physician. If one were to hold the physician responsible and liable for every error, who would want to be a physician?

Since it is not always possible to determine error or negligence, another ruling stated that although the earthly court may hold the physician innocent, his definitive judgement is reserved to Heaven. This thought is derived from Tosefta Babba

Kamma 6:17.

We have looked at the unique problems and situations that our ancient brethren had to face in their search for, and development of, an ethical and effective medical system; and how they found solutions which seemed to satisfy the majority of them. This they did without going outside the "fence" set up by the Torah or Halakha. It is striking how much of their practices are applicable in our time

(Excerpted from a talk given by Dr. Nathan Krinsky before the Mishnah Fellowship of The Brooklyn Jewish Center, on February 20, 1983.)

November Replete With Important Legal Holidays

The month of November is an important month in our secular history. On the eighth, we are given a valuable opportunity to go to the polls to exercise our right of franchise, one that is denied many people throughout the world. Although there are no earth-shattering candidacies or issues, nevertheless, we must use our vote.

November 11th is observed as Veterans Day. Originally known as Armistice Day, commemorating the end of the World War, the name was changed to give recognition to our veterans after the Global War, that we now know as World War II.

The Pilgrim Fathers started a tradition over three hundred years ago that has now become Thanksgiving Day, celebrated this year on November 24th. A controversy broke out some years ago when the month had five Thursdays. As one party saw it as a political ploy, a law was enacted establishing this holiday on the 4th Thursday. Don't overeat but enjoy and don't forget to vote.

United Nations Partition Day Observed November 29th

On November 29th, 36 years ago, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine, and set up the Jewish State. This decision climaxed many years of Zionist efforts. Three decades previously, on November 2, 1917, the Balfour Declaration was issued. It was the first recognition by a modern nation of the Jewish claim to Palestine as a national homeland.

Mobilizing Human Material To Fight Human Illnesses

by Galina Vromen

Rehovot, Israel — A new pharmaceutical firm here is seeking ways to harness the body's natural defenses in the fight against certain viruses, autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis - and ultimately cancer. It is among a dozen companies in the world working on fibroblast interferon, a human protein that helps fight viruses and has been touted by some scientists as a potential anti-cancer drug.

The firm is also involved in the production and marketing of human growth hormones and in researching the use of an embryonic protein for potential treatment of diseases engendered by the body's immune reactions to itself.

"Interfering with viruses

Working together with the prestigious Weizmann Institute of Science, the firm is in the clinical trial stages of developing fibroblast interferon, a human protein which they are producing from the foreskins of circumcised infants.

Interferon received its name more than 20 years ago when a British virologist discovered that a substance secreted by cells as part of the body's natural defense system 'interfered' with the multiplication of viruses.

Interferon is synthesized in miniscule quantities by most body cells when alerted to a viral infection in a nearby tissue. Secreted into the tissue, it allows for biochemical changes that increase the tissue's resistance to the virus.

"The use of foreskins came about because they were readily available in Israel," said Israel Makov, director of the company. Makov added that the young and healthy condition of the fibroblast cells found in foreskins facilitates the extraction of the material.

In Israel and abroad, it is being clinically tested as a possible cure for eye infections caused by adenovirus, herpes, some forms of hepatitis and conjunctivitis.

The discovery that interferon also slows down the division of cancer cells led to wild speculation in the mid-1970s that a miracle cure for cancer had been found. "Public expectation, based on it conclusive scientific results, created a unrealistic atmosphere," says Makor But he believes that careful research over a long period of time may yet demonstratinterferon's usefulness in controlling cancer.

The firm has been producing interfero from the fibroblast cells with the aid of culture tissue techniques developed at the Weizmann Institute by Drs. D. Guarar Rotman and T. Landau. Once extricate from the foreskins, the cells are grown in a nutrient medium, extracted, purified and freeze-dried.

In recent years new genetic engineerin techniques for the eventual production of synthetic interferon have been advanced and the company hopes to incorporate the new methods. Interferon is not available for sale to the public, but small quantities were sold to research institutes.

Growth Hormones

Most of the company's sales came from the marketing of human growth hormone to prevent dwarfing in children who suffer from pituitary malfunction. A series of injections of the expensive hormone which is extracted in Israel from imported post-mortem pituitary glands, allows the children to achieve their genetic height.

In yet another project, it is workin together with the Hadassah-Hebrer University Medical Center on the use of protein produced by the human fetus that may be useful in fighting auto-immundiseases that often lead to loss of muscl control. These diseases occur because the immune systems mistakes a part of the body to be foreign and mobilizes it forces to attack it. In short, the body begins to self-destruct.

Hadassah researchers noted a remission in these diseases during pregnancy and began asking why this occurred. The now believe that alpha-feto protein, produced by the fetus, suppresses certain immunities. The company joined the Hadassah research team to investigate the potential commercial application of the protein.

Greetings for the New Year Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel Cohen 10 Plaza Street - 11 -

New Year Greetings

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57-68 228th Street Bayside, New York Mr. and Mrs. Julius Kushner

Rabbi and Mrs. Harold Kushner and Family

Rabbi and Mrs. Paul Kushner and Family

extend their fervent wishes to all for a New Year of Peace and Health...

and in loving memory, on these High Holy Days, her family and dear friends fondly remember

Sarah H. Kushner a woman of valor...

In Memory of

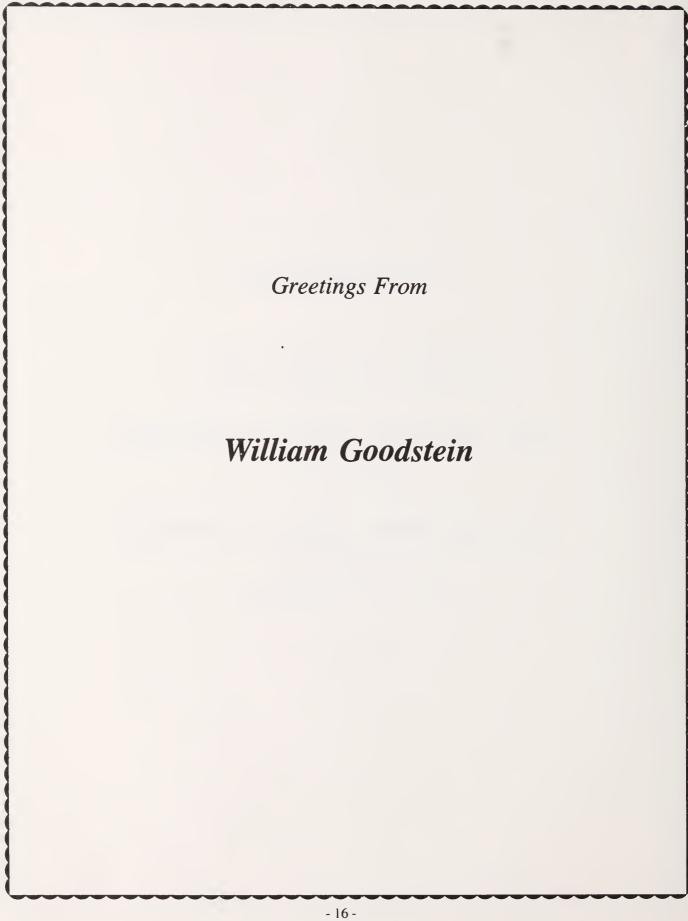
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From her family

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Mr. and Mrs. Julius Leventhal



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and Family

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and Loving Parents

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and

Ann Karen and Oscar Fruchtman

Louis and Sylvia B. Kramer

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Mr. and Mrs.

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and Family

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41 Eastern Parkway

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Mrs. Morton Klinghoffer children and grandchildren
3215 Avenue H

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In Memory of Loved Ones

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